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Councilmember Liccardo Convenes Meetings Among Downtown Neighborhood Leadership

The day after his public swearing-in, San Jose Councilmember Sam Liccardo will hit the ground running by convening a Neighborhood Advisory Group, which will meet monthly. Councilmember Liccardo personally reached out to residents by telephone to encourage representation from the leadership of each of the over two dozen neighborhoods surrounding San Jose's downtown. Liccardo expects that communication and participation within the Group will be fostered by a combination of innovative uses of internet-based technologies and old-fashioned word-of-mouth.

This effort builds on the momentum created by the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative and Liccardo's predecessor, Cindy Chavez, to incorporate neighborhood leadership into decision-making. What makes this effort unique is the emphasis on *district-wide* priority-setting and problem-solving. As Liccardo notes, "in an area with such an overwhelming number of challenges and opportunities as District Three, it becomes easy to fall into the 'whack-a-mole' mentality, that is, spending all of your time combating the crisis-du-jour. We want to identify the biggest challenges that routinely and repeatedly afflict our downtown residents, and focus our energies on developing some long-term solutions through changes in City policy and budgetary priorities.

Responsibilities of the Neighborhood Advisory Group will include:

- Identifying priorities for capital spending on parks, pools, community centers, and other neighborhood amenities,
- Planning the annual Neighborhood Summit,
- Identifying key district-wide priorities for ordinance changes before Council,
- Providing input to changes the upcoming General Plan,
- Facilitating better communication between residents and City Hall.

The first Neighborhood Advisory Group meeting will occur at 6 pm on Wednesday, January 10th, in room 120 of City Hall, and will seek to familiarize participants with the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget. The CIP funds the construction and renovation of parks, community centers, and other neighborhood-serving capital projects. City staff will answer questions posed by neighborhood leaders about potential project features and costs. Ultimately, Councilmember Liccardo hopes that community leaders' input will assist him in prioritizing the types of projects and the amounts at which projects will be funded.

The City will make translation services available for neighborhood leaders with limited English proficiency. Meetings will be open to the public and notes from each monthly meeting will be made available on the District Three website.

Councilmember Liccardo has asked community leader Ken Podgorsek to facilitate the group. Podgorsek, a Sunshine Task Force member and downtown neighborhood activist, will seek to develop a constructive dialogue among the neighborhood leadership in the Neighborhood Advisory Group. The Group will also rely upon internet-based technologies, such as a newsgroups and group email, to encourage dialogue and to ensure that information efficiently flows between neighborhood residents and City Hall.

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